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American Planning Association
Texas Chapter
Making Great Communities Happen

2017-2019 APA Texas Chapter Board of Directors Elected Officers



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Kim Mickelson, JD, AICP
APATX Past-President
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Senior Assistant City Attorney

**What is your
 greatest
 professional
 accomplishment?**

Having the Plano Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan receive the APA National Daniel Burnham Award for a Comprehensive Plan in 2017. Our Planning team in Plano developed this plan in-house over a 26-month period and pushed the limits by having it completely web-based.

Taking a city from having no planning department to updating all long-range plans and a new, progressive Unified Development Code.

The Houston Airport System was preparing to do their first Peak Week Study at George Bush Intercontinental Airport. My task was to identify necessary observations points within five terminal of the tenth-busiest airport for total passengers in North America. I successfully hired, scheduled, and managed 60 interns throughout five terminals for 13 consecutive days, 22 hours per day to perform all observations required in the Peak Week Study. The documentation for the study was a success and came in on time and under budget.

I was the project manager for new bike lanes in Arlington after a very contentious plan adoption, including a road diet. The process was challenging due to concerns of the community, federal funding, and it being a new process for staff and our contractor, but the lanes are now in and serving the residents of Arlington.

Tie: completing a state-mandated effectiveness study of the City South Management Authority and implementing the recommendations (San Antonio), and adopting dark skies and sound attenuation overlays surrounding Camp Bullis to protect military missions (San Antonio); when the New Braunfels Comprehensive Plan (currently underway) is adopted, it will be included or surpass the above.

The most FUN project--and a big accomplishment--was the work on airport land use controls for the City of Houston around the three airports, along with the administrative setup--Houston never had a board of adjustment before.

Q. Tell us about a project(s) you are currently working on.



Our Comprehensive Planning team is working on a small area plan called Envision Oak Point, which encompasses the city's event center, Collin College, a working dairy farm, the second largest piece of undeveloped land in the city, and a nearly vacant mall – all bounded by a nature preserve and a future DART rail line. This is the first area plan to be conducted following the adoption of the new Comp Plan. In addition, we are working with P&Z and the public to develop regulations for Backyard Cottage housing (expanding ADUs), and finishing up a rewrite to the Heritage Preservation Ordinance. We are also nearing kickoff on an update to the Heritage Preservation Plan and about to go out for proposals to complete an Expressway Corridor Air and Noise Pollution Study for adjacent residential uses.



The most exciting thing I'm working on is implementing a \$55 million bond initiative including a new city hall & library, police station, key roadway improvements including complete street designs, critical drainage infrastructure, and a multimillion dollar reimagining of the City's oldest park.



I work on a variety of different types of projects. My current projects are as followed: Houston Independent School District I facilitate a team of engineers, surveyors, and contractors to do street and utility abandonment, parking variances, subdivision plats, subdivision plat variances, and utility work for schools that are part of the 2012 Bond Program. Those schools include Booker T Washington High School, Garden Oaks Montessori School, High School for Law and Justice, Scarborough High School, Sharpstown High School, and Stephen F Austin High School. Houston-Galveston Area Council I perform current/future land use and zoning analysis to provide recommendations for enhancing safety, mitigating congestion, enhancing streetscapes, addressing heavy freight traffic, mitigate mobility barriers, increase connectivity for all modes of transportation, and consolidation of driveways median openings for the State Highway 146 Sub-regional Corridor Plan. METRO I analyze bus stops, hike and bike trails, sidewalks, rail stops, and ramps within a half mile from each rail stop on the North Light Rail Line to determine which items were universally accessible and areas that needed improvement. Additional tasks included analyzing land use changes and multifamily/ single-family unit differences between 2012 (before the light rail construction) and 2016 (after the light rail was operational).



My main role is to manage trail design and construction projects. We are currently working on a trail along Dallas Area Rapid Transit right-of-way that includes federal funding, meaning TxDOT has oversight. Between TxDOT, the railroads, and a complex project site, it's been a challenging project that we are looking forward to seeing happen on the ground.



New Braunfels Comprehensive Plan - in the works for over a year, this is an update to the 1999 plan and its 2006 update. We are looking at innovative new approaches to future land use.



Revising the City of Houston development and floodplain regulations post-Harvey.

Q. If you could name one person who has influenced you in your career, who would it be?



There is a long list of people I credit for influencing my career. I would say Carol Barrett, primarily because she introduced me to APA leadership and been a source of excellent advice over the years.



Venita Ray



The former deputy city manager of the first city I interned at, Chris Fuller. He took the time to ensure I understood more of what planning really was and encouraged me to think beyond my position and city. He's been someone I've consulted throughout my career.



Roderick Sanchez, AICP



Robert Freilich



Outside of my direct supervisors who have been instrumental in my professional growth, I would say Clayton Husband has influenced my career. He was my first mentor as I was interning and continues to be my sounding board when I am looking for professional guidance. Clayton recruited me to become involved in APA and I am grateful that he suckered me into it.

Q. What is one piece of advice you would give a planner beginning his or her career?



Be a sponge and absorb all the information you can.



Interview for the company culture that fits, work hard, and don't be afraid to move on.



A piece of advice I've appreciated as someone working for a public agency – watch Council meetings regularly to keep a pulse on what's going on in the City. It's easy to lose sight of the bigger picture if you don't. Also, before I started grad school, I was advised to read *Suburban Nation*, *The Power Broker*, and *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* – all really interesting books that gave me a nice framework to start my planning studies.



Don't underestimate the power of networking. Getting involved and forming valuable relationships with other planning professionals is important to your own professional development.



Say yes. Take advantage of every opportunity to try or learn something new, even if you aren't confident.



Be nimble, change-ready, open to learning, and always-ambitious.

Q. What is your favorite getaway spot in Texas?



It's not much of a getaway because it's so close, but I love Fort Worth, particularly the Near Southside. I lived there for over 4 years and I miss the pace, easy bicycling, culture, community, and people. I still love to visit whenever I can.



Big Bend region of Texas



Almost any state park, but I absolutely love the diversity, beauty & solitude of Big Bend National Park.



The Nueces River anywhere between the headwaters around Barksdale to where the gravel bottom ends south of Uvalde.



Galveston Island



DKR Memorial Stadium, The University of Texas, Austin

Q. What do you hope to accomplish in your APATX role over the next two years?



I'm looking forward to helping further the goals of the organization from the adopted development plan including enhancing communication and advocacy. Plus, take some really great minutes... everybody loves minutes.



Community collaboration on legislative strategies, both proactive and reactive.



Get Planning Matters and other advocacy preparations ready for whatever the legislature throws at us.



We have a lot to accomplish based on our recently approved Action Plan, but generally, during my term as President, I would like for us to improve on communication and transparency, strengthen our advocacy and legislative network, and continue making refinements to the Chapter Conference and Chapter Awards Program based on the membership survey comments.



Find the matches that Doug is hiding from me! My big goal is getting the APA name out there more and telling the story of the awesome planning work in Texas in a way that the general public & State leaders can appreciate. I'm also interested in exploring creative new ideas at the conference to both engage planners new to the profession & reenergize those of us that have been at it for a bit.



I want to be able to build the Chapter's reserve in order to support and fund additional programs the Board would like to implement

Q. How do you spend your free time?



Camping with my family.



I'm usually out in the yard planting something (or trying not to kill my plants) or on the trail riding my bike with my spouse. During football season, you can regularly find me in Lubbock at Jones AT&T Stadium (Go Tech!)



With my family, hiking, and/or cycling.



What's free time?



Hanging out with my spouse, our exchange student and our two dogs, usually somewhere outdoors or catching some live music somewhere.



Traveling, bicycling, jogging, spending time with friends. My boyfriend and I adopted two kittens a while back - they're pretty entertaining to spend time with.

Q. What is your favorite childhood memory?



Finding rose quartz stones in my grandmother's South Dakota backyard.



Going on summer road trips to Schlitterbahn in New Braunfels. Our family would stay in the park, which means my brother and I would try and ride the rides after the park was closed (which is highly frowned upon by Schlitterbahn staff).



Probably riding my bike to school and all over the neighborhood with my friends.



Spending the summer traveling to where my dad was working at the time. He is a planner and scheduler for nuclear and petrochemical power plants so we spent lots of time along the East and Gulf Coast.



It's hard to pick just one, but when we visited my grandparents in Saint Paul, we would sometimes get to go to a really amazing McDonald's playground. It was probably just a regular McDonald's playground, with all the character-themed equipment, but it had a tram that took you from the restaurant up a hill to the playground, and that was like nothing I had ever seen. Unfortunately I've learned the playground and tram are now closed, but when I was there a few years ago I saw they still have the old McDonald's mural on the wall.



Summer trips to Port Aransas.



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Q. What would you sing at Karaoke night?



Ice Ice Baby - Vanilla Ice



Currently I love singing in the shower Pink "What About Us" but I am way too shy to ever do it in public.



If the crowd is right, and ideally it's a room-rental karaoke spot, I'd probably sing She Thinks My Tractor's Sexy by Kenny Chesney or Wannabe by the Spice Girls. They would both be equally ridiculous.



Killing in the Name by Rage Against the Machine



Mack the Knife



Oh, you don't want me to sing...trust me.